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Testimony of Kathleen McKirchy, Executive Director,

“Recovery Tracking Hearing #3-

Following the Dollars to the Jobs”

Before the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Building and
Emergency Management
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Chairwoman

27 October 2009

Chairwoman Norton and members of the Subcommittee, I am here representing the non-profit arm, the Community Services Agency, of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO which is the area labor federation representing 175 local unions and 150,000 union members in the metro area.

I am here today to thank you, Madame Chairwoman, and the members of the Subcommittee, for making dollars available to put area residents back to work, and to help them reap the benefits of federal stimulus spending and the private sector economic development which we are confident will result from that spending.

We are very honored to have won a contract from the General Services Administration to provide pre-apprenticeship training and job placement services to 220 area low-income residents, including women, minorities, youth and ex-offenders. It is gratifying that this award was made to an entity connected with the registered union apprenticeship programs, which are jointly-operated labor-management programs and are among the best in the country for level of training, completion rates, and continuing career development for workers.

We are also very honored to be partnering with Wider Opportunities for Women, represented here today by Camille Cormier, Local Programs Director and Covenant House DC, represented by Larry Gold, Director of Community Services, who are our subcontractors. We also have partnerships with the area union registered apprenticeship programs and the Associated General Contractors of DC, who will assist us with job placement, as well as agreements with over 30 area community-based organizations who will help us recruit clients for this project and coordinate case management of these clients with us.

Our contract was awarded effective October 1, 2009 and we will be providing the following deliverables:

We will provide pre-apprenticeship training to 180 individuals, which includes the Core Curriculum, a new 120-hour pre-apprenticeship curriculum developed by the national AFL-CIO Building and Construction Trades Department. The Core Curriculum consists of OSHA 10 (10 hours), CPR and First Aid (8 hours), blueprint reading (24 hours), orientation to the industry (14 hours), construction math (40 hours), careers, apprenticeships, unions, job potential etc (16 hours), tools and materials (8 hours). The trades have agreed that where jobs are available, successful graduates of the Core Curriculum are candidates for direct entry into apprenticeship schools.

In addition to the basic Core Curriculum, job readiness and adult education components, this pre-apprenticeship program will provide an overview of weatherization and energy efficiency career paths – particularly relevant given the large amount of economic stimulus training dollars to be devoted to this sector under the ARRA. Participants will be exposed to and have basic hands-on training around three principal occupations: weatherization technician, weatherization crew supervisor, and energy auditor. The Laborers' union has a curriculum from which we will draw. The program will also serve as a platform into a broader array of building maintenance, operations and retrofitting work performed to local and Federal environmental specifications. The basic program components include introduction to building systems weatherization techniques, and introduction to construction and energy-audit software.

During the course of the program, students will be given an overview of weatherization careers – team-oriented work, and weatherization career paths by individual unions/local government agencies involved in some aspect of weatherization, including laborers, cement masons, carpenters, operating engineers, heat and frost/insulation installers. The students will become familiar with weatherization tools such as blowers, infrared cameras, pressure pans, manometers, combustion analyzers, and gas leak detectors. By the conclusion of the course, students will be familiar with the energy auditing, diagnosis, and installation or retrofit cycle. The Associated General Contractors of DC will assist with materials for these green construction elements.

Finally, participants will be provided with some hands-on training at various union apprenticeship schools in the area. Experiences include building of stools, work boxes and other items out of wood and metal, learning to weld, working with hand and power tools, laying concrete and work with cement, handling of piping and electrical conduit and similar real-work exposure.

Classes for youth ages 18-24 will be conducted at the Covenant House location at 2001 Mississippi Avenue SE in Washington, DC. Classes for those over ages 24 will be conducted at Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 891, 1517 Kenilworth Avenue NE, Washington, DC. The hands-on training at the union apprenticeship schools will occur at sites in Washington, DC and Prince George's County. Our first class for adults begins November 2, and we will have 30 students in this class.

Thirty-two individuals will be trained through Covenant House's "Off the Block Artisans Training Program", a challenging vocational job training program in woodworking which prepares 18-24 year olds for entry level jobs in the skilled craft trades. Trainees learn in a real work environment -- that of a small production cabinet shop. Students learn over a three month period to handle the demands, expectations and consequences of an actual job and they receive a stipend for their efforts. As youth near graduation, we will be providing job placement assistance to help them into entry level jobs.

The basic pre-apprenticeship training classes are planned for the following schedule and we will add or adjust classes as necessary to meet our commitments:

Youth (18-24 year olds) training at CH:

January 11- February 19, 2010

April 5- May 14, 2010

July 12- August 20, 2010

Adults training at OPCM Local 891

November 2- December 11, 2009

February 8- March 19, 2010

April 26- June 4, 2010

August 2- September 10, 2010

We will also be providing wrap-around case management services, job placement assistance and job retention and follow-up services, following individuals for 30, 60, and 90 days through the end of the grant period.

Excitingly, GSA is overseeing several major projects in the metro area including the new Coast Guard and Homeland Security Headquarters buildings going up on the St. Elizabeth's campus in Ward 8, as well as the federal government energy efficiency retrofitting work which will begin soon. We have had conversations with representatives of the GSA regarding the possibilities of job placement for ex-offenders on these jobs, given the security clearances normally required for work of this type. They have indicated some flexibility in this area.

They are also providing, by February most likely, a trailer with training space located on the St. Elizabeth's campus, that we will be able to use for recruitment of SE DC residents, and training as well.

We have been in touch with Clark Construction which is the general contractor on the Coast Guard Headquarters project, and will continue to work with them closely on securing jobs for our clients.

Thank you again, Madame Chairwoman, for the leadership role you have played in securing these funds. We are committed, all of the subcontractors and partners, to operating a quality program which satisfies our deliverables and helps put our target population of local residents to work in great careers in the construction industry.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.